

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resource Commission**

ITEM

10

DECISION

TOPIC

Adopted and Final - Chapter 33, REAP Scoring Criteria

The Department requests Commission approval to adopt amendments to Chapter 33 that define and clarify scoring criteria for REAP grants for county conservation boards, cities, and private cost sharing entities.

Changes were made from the NOIA, as explained in the preamble and as supported by stakeholders.

Ken Herring, Administrator
Conservation and Recreation Division
December 13, 2007

Attached: Adopted and Final-Chapter 33

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION[571]
Adopted and Final

Pursuant to the authority of Iowa Code subsection 455A.5(6), the Natural Resource Commission hereby adopts amendments to Chapter 33, "Resource Enhancement and Protection Program: County, City and Private Open Spaces Grant Programs," Iowa Administrative Code.

These amendments clarify the selection criteria that committees shall use to evaluate grant applications under this program.

Notice of Intended Action was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on August 29, 2007, as ARC 6200B.

A public hearing was held on September 28, 2007, during which a few suggestions were made to improve the amendments. Changes from the Notice of Intended Action include changing the phrase "state or federally listed threatened and endangered species" to the more contemporary and inclusive reference of "species of greatest conservation need" in four places of the amendments, as used in Iowa's 2006 Iowa Wildlife Action Plan. Under Items 1 and 2, wording was inserted in reference to construction/development that describes and encourages grant applicants to follow ecological principles in site improvements.

Additionally, the NOIA had included a misplaced paragraph that was deleted from 33.40(4). The NOIA also had allocated "points" to the scoring criteria, making it difficult for selection committees to score the criteria as they had in the past. The NOIA was changed to allow the committees to score each criterion from one to ten, low to high, then the varying weighted multipliers are assigned to each to yield a final score.

These amendments are intended to implement Iowa Code chapter 455A.

The following amendments are adopted.

ITEM 1. Amend subrule 571 – 33.40(4) as follows

33.30(4) Project selection criteria. Under the competitive grants program, a project planning and review committee shall establish criteria and scoring systems to be utilized in project evaluation. Criteria and scoring systems must be distributed to all counties at least 90 days prior to project application deadline. Criteria will be reviewed at least annually to determine if amendments are needed. ~~Criteria and weight factor(s) shall include, but are not limited to, the following:~~ The committee shall evaluate and rank the resource enhancement and protection (REAP) county conservation grant applications, scoring each criteria from one (1) to ten (10), low to high, and use the following multipliers for each criteria:

- ~~a. Public demand or need. (2)~~
- ~~b. Project uniqueness. (2)~~
- ~~c. Quality of site or project, or both. (3)~~
- ~~d. Urgency of proposed action. (2)~~
- ~~e. Multiple benefits to be provided. (2)~~
~~(This includes multiple recreational benefits, environmental quality benefits, and other similar benefits.)~~
- ~~f. Relationship to the Iowa statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, Iowa open spaces protection plan and other current and relevant state, regional and local plans. (4)~~
- ~~g. Quality of public communications plan. (1)~~
- ~~h. Economic benefits to local, regional or state area. (1)~~
- ~~i. Geographic distribution. (1)~~

a. The committee shall use a multiplier of four (4) for a demonstrated relationship to the state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, the Iowa open spaces protection plan, the county resource enhancement plan, and other relevant local, state and federal plans.

b. The committee shall use a multiplier of three (3) for the quality of the site or the project, or both.

(1) Quality of site. For land acquisition projects, the committee shall consider the following characteristics:

1. Level of significance. Relative rarity of the natural resources found on the project site, including but not limited to native vegetation, documented presence of species of greatest conservation need, as defined by the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan as developed by the Department and as may be amended from time to time, or other uncommonly occurring but native resources.

2. Resource representation. Quality of the project site, including but not limited to the size and diversity of the project area and the vegetation and wildlife it supports.

3. Relation to public land. Proximity to existing wildlife management areas, existing parks and other public recreation areas, or other greenbelt areas already under public ownership and management.

(2) Quality of project.

For construction projects, the committee shall consider plans that demonstrate the highest and best site-specific quality of design, including projects that use materials that incorporate energy savings and adhere to sustainable building principles, including waste minimizations and material re-use; plans for improvements that enhance the restoration or expansion of Iowa's natural resources or that use development principles that benefit the natural ecology of the proposed area; plans that include innovations or construction methods in the design and development of the project; and projects whose actual design and construction will exceed commonly accepted design and construction standards.

c. The committee shall use a multiplier of two (2) for each of the following:

(1) Multiple benefits. Project provides the greatest number of public benefits/services to meet the public's diverse outdoor recreation interests.

(2) Public need. Demonstrated need for the project; increased public use of the project area as a result of the award, as documented through surveys and other testing methods; letters of support; and planning processes that consider social, demographic, ecological and economic considerations.

(3) Urgency of project. Specific factors or immediate threats to the project area that constitute urgency for acquisition or development, including but not limited to urban expansion, residential development, agricultural activities or clearing.

(4) Unique project characteristics. Documented relative rarity or uniqueness of the natural, cultural and historical resources found on the project site, including but not limited to the presence of rare or unique plant and animal species; rare, unique or protected ecosystems; and historical markers and other historically or culturally significant finds.

d. The committee shall use a multiplier of one (1) for each of the following:

(1) Communication plan. Project sponsor's effort to inform and advise constituents and users about the importance of the proposed project and the plans to promote the proposed project to expected user groups.

(2) Economic benefit. Estimate of positive impact to local tourism, existing businesses, encouragement of new businesses, and values to nearby property owners.

ITEM 2. Amend subrule 33.40(5) as follows:

~~33.40(5) Criteria for project evaluation. Criteria and weight factors to be used in scoring projects shall include, but are not limited to, the following: The committee shall evaluate and rank the resource enhancement and protection (REAP) city grant applications, scoring each criteria from one (1) to ten (10), low to high, and use the following multipliers for each criteria:~~

- ~~a. Quality of site or project, or both. (3)~~
- ~~b. Direct recreational benefits. (2)~~
- ~~c. Local need. (2)~~
- ~~d. Number of people benefited. (2)~~
- ~~e. Relationship to Iowa state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, Iowa open spaces protection plan and other current and relevant state, regional and local plans. (4)~~
- ~~f. Environmental benefits. (2)~~
- ~~g. Quality of public communications plan. (1)~~

~~Up to 2 bonus and 3 penalty points may also be assigned based on prior grants, the size and number of grants already underway or approved within the applicant's community, or performance on past projects.~~

~~a. The committee shall use a multiplier of four (4) for the relationship to relevant regional and statewide programs based on the demonstrated relationship to the state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, the Iowa open spaces protection plan, the county resource enhancement plan, and other relevant local, state and federal plans.~~

~~b. The committee shall use a multiplier of three (3) for the quality of the site or the project, or both:~~

~~(1) Quality of site for land acquisition projects. The committee shall consider the following characteristics:~~

~~1. Level of significance. Relative rarity of the natural resources found on the project site, including but not limited to native vegetation, the documented presence of species of greatest conservation need as defined by the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan as developed by the Department and as may be amended from time to time, or other uncommonly occurring but native resources.~~

~~2. Resource representation. The quality of the project site, including but not limited to the size and diversity of the project area and the vegetation and wildlife it supports.~~

~~3. Level of threat. Specific factors or immediate threats to the project area that constitute urgency for acquisition and development, including but not limited to urban expansion, residential development, agricultural activities, or clearing.~~

~~4. Relation to public land. Proximity to existing wildlife management areas, existing parks, other public recreation areas or other greenbelt areas already under public ownership and management.~~

~~(2) Quality of project. For construction projects, the committee shall consider plans that demonstrate the highest and best site-specific quality of design, including projects that use materials that incorporate energy savings and adhere to sustainable building principles, including waste minimizations and material re-use; plans for improvements that enhance the restoration or expansion of Iowa's natural resources or that use development principles that benefit the natural ecology of the proposed area; plans that include innovations or construction methods in the design and development of the project; and projects whose actual design and construction will exceed commonly accepted design and construction standards.~~

~~c. The committee shall use a multiplier of two (2) for each of the following:~~

(1) Environmental benefits. Projects that demonstrate a benefit to the surrounding environment, including but not limited to incorporation of land improvements that may have a positive impact on the larger ecosystem, such as timber or prairie establishment, wetland or filter strip development.

(2) Public benefit. A realistic estimate of the number of users of the project area and consideration of secondary benefits such as impacts to local tourism, surrounding businesses and adjacent property owners.

(3) Local support. Demonstrated need for the project and increased public use of the project area as a result of the award as documented through surveys and other testing methods, letters of support, and planning processes that consider social, demographic, ecological and economic considerations.

d. The committee shall use a multiplier of one (1) for a communication plan that identifies the project sponsor's effort to inform and advise constituents and users about the importance of the proposed project, and the plans to promote the proposed project to expected user groups.

ITEM 3. Amend subrule 33.50(5) as follows:

~~33.50(5) Criteria. The following criteria and their respective weights shall be used by the committee, along with other criteria which are determined by the committee to be relevant. The committee shall evaluate and rank the resource enhancement and protection (REAP) private cost-share grant applications, scoring each criteria from one (1) to ten (10), low to high, and use the following multipliers for each criteria:~~

- ~~a. Level of significance. (3)~~
- ~~b. Resource representation. (3)~~
- ~~e. Level of threat. (3)~~
- ~~d. Relationship to existing public land. (3)~~
- ~~e. Relationship to state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, Iowa open spaces protection plan and other current and relevant state, regional and local plans. (3)~~
- ~~f. Rare or unique species or communities. (2)~~
- ~~g. Public benefits. (2)~~
- ~~h. Tourism and economic development potential. (1)~~
- ~~i. Geographic distribution. (1)~~
- ~~j. Multiple use potential. (1)~~
- ~~k. Available funds relative to project costs. (1)~~
- ~~l. Quality of public communications plan. (1)~~

a. The committee shall use a multiplier of three (3) for each of the following:

(1) Level of significance. The relative rarity of the natural resources found on the project site, including but not limited to native vegetation and the documented presence of species of greatest conservation need as defined by the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan as developed by the Department and as may be amended from time to time, or other uncommonly occurring but native resources.

(2) Resource representation. The quality of the project site, including but not limited to the size and diversity of the project area and the vegetation and wildlife it supports.

(3) Level of threat. Specific factors and immediate threats to the project area that constitute urgency for acquisition and development, including but not limited to urban expansion, residential development, agricultural activities, or clearing.

(4) Relation to public land. The proximity to existing wildlife management areas, existing parks, and other public recreation or greenbelt areas already under public ownership and management.

(5) Relationship to relevant regional and statewide programs. A demonstrated relationship to the state comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, the Iowa open spaces protection plan or the county resource enhancement plan. The committee may evaluate other relevant local, state and federal plans at its discretion.

b. The committee shall use a multiplier of two (2) for each of the following:

(1) Rare or unique species communities. The documented presence of species of greatest conservation need, as defined by the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan as developed by the Department and as may be amended from time to time, in addition to 33.50.(5)"a"(1).

(2) Public benefits. A demonstrated benefit to the public, including but not limited to expanded recreational or educational opportunities and incorporation of land improvements that may have a positive impact on the ecosystem, such as bank stabilization, wetland development, or filter strips.

c. The committee shall use a multiplier of one (1) for each of the following:

(1) Tourism and economic development potential. Impact on local tourism, including any enhancements to the economy in the vicinity of the project.

(2) Geographic distribution. Project site is located in a city or county that has not received a REAP grant.

(3) Multiple use potential. Project site provides more than one public use, e.g., the project provides hunting, fishing and hiking opportunities to the public.

(4) Additional funds. Level of funds obligated in excess of the minimum cost-share requirements.

(5) Quality of public communication plan. Project sponsor's effort to inform and advise constituents and users about the importance of the proposed project, and plans to promote the proposed project to expected user groups.

Date

Richard A. Leopold, Director

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Richard A. Leopold, Director